

CIA poison arsenal explained

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Central Intelligence Agency maintained a secret poison arsenal and developed sophisticated hardware to deliver the toxins despite a presidential order to eliminate the poison stockpile, according to CIA Director William E. Colby.

He told the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday that records from the \$3-million CIA-Army poison project later were obliterated on orders of then-CIA Director Richard Helms. Just hours later, a CIA counsel said Colby was in error and that no records were destroyed.

But committee counsel Frederick A.O. Schwartz Jr., said, "We have evidence that there are memos which one would think should exist which no longer exist." He said Helms will be questioned about the matter when he testifies Wednesday.

In dramatic testimony on the first day of the committee's public hearings, Colby displayed a poison dart gun which can use a tiny amount of poison to kill a person silently, instantly and without a trace.

Colby said 37 lethal poisons were discovered in an agency inventory of its laboratories, but that some were not subject to orders by President Nixon that the agency and the Pentagon destroy poison stockpiles.

However, shortly after Colby testified that Helms ordered the files destroyed in November 1972, CIA chief counsel Mitchell Rogovin told reporters Colby had misspoken himself entirely.

He said not only is there no memo tying Helms to the destruction of documents, as Colby testified, there also is no reason to believe that any documents relating to the poison project were ever destroyed.

He gave no reason for the discrepancy and would only say that Colby would clarify the matter in a letter to the committee.

In another memo released to the committee Tuesday, written in 1967, a high CIA official discussed aspects of code-named "E.M. Naomi" poison projects which included development of a means of sending poisonous chemical and biological agents through a subway system. Another plan was for crop warfare.

Colby said subway tests were actually conducted in New York City, but hazardous materials were not used. The memo discussed testing of three methods of "carrying out a covert attack

against crops and causing severe crop loss."

Brandishing a jet-black, dart gun which he said could deliver a lethal dose of shellfish toxin instantaneously from 100 meters away, Colby said two teaspoons of the shellfish poison were hidden away in 1970 to save them from being destroyed. He said the volume retained by the CIA was enough to kill several thousand persons.

Colby said the shellfish poison was developed as a successor to cyanide "suicide" pills. He told the committee a shellfish tab was carried by Gary Francis Powers on his ill-fated 1960 U-2 mission over the Soviet Union.

But Powers said in Los Angeles Tuesday he carried another poison — curare.